

2026 Oklahoma Bar Association Law Day Contest Prompts

The Rule of Law and the American Dream

Use the following prompts to explore the theme “The Rule of Law and the American Dream.” There is no minimum or maximum length required for writing entries – focus on sharing your ideas clearly. For middle and high school students, each set of prompts includes a research-based prompt and a creative writing prompt.

The prompts are designed to accompany the 2019 Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies, published by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Numbers in parentheses represent the specific objective from those standards. The standards can be found at <http://bit.ly/4hxdX51>.

Elementary School	
Grades	Prompt
1st, 2nd and 3rd	In the United States, we believe in the American dream, the idea that everyone can work hard to reach their goals. The laws in our country also help keep things fair so everyone has a chance to do their best. Explain what your goal is and how following the rules can help you achieve that goal. Think about: • What your dream for the future is. • How rules at school or in your community help everyone have a fair chance. • What happens when people don’t follow the rules. • How you can show fairness, respect and kindness to others.
4th and 5th	In the United States, being a good citizen means caring about your community, following the laws, helping others and making good choices. The rule of law ensures that everyone follows the same rules, keeping things fair and protecting the American dream – the idea that anyone can work hard to reach their goals. Explain how following the law helps people achieve the American dream and why good citizenship is important. Think about: • What it means to follow the rules and respect others. • How fair laws help protect everyone’s rights and freedoms.

	• Why things like voting, helping others and following laws make our country strong. • How people can work together and show respect, even when they don't agree. • Ways you can help your school or community be a better place.
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Middle School	
Grade	Prompt
6th (6.3.5, 6.3.6)	The rule of law helps protect people's rights and gives them a fair chance to reach their dreams. In some countries, laws are created by the people through voting. In others, one leader makes all the decisions. Compare two different systems of government. Explain how each system makes and enforces laws, what role citizens have in choosing leaders and shaping laws and how the rule of law affects people's freedoms and chances to reach their goals or dreams. Use facts and examples to show how the rule of law can protect or limit the American dream in different kinds of governments. Imagine two students who live in different countries. One lives in a democracy where people vote, and the rule of law protects everyone's rights. The other lives in a country where one ruler makes all the laws. Write a story or diary entry from both students' points of view. Describe what each student's daily life is like under their government, how each one tries to reach their dreams for the future and how the rules and laws in their countries help or hurt their chances to succeed.
7th (7.3.5, 7.3.7, 7.3.8)	The rule of law provides a framework that allows people to pursue their goals and achieve the American dream. Different forms of government enforce rules and laws in very different ways. Compare two of these. Explain how each system makes and enforces laws, the role citizens play in choosing leaders and influencing lawmaking and how these differences affect individual freedoms and opportunities. How can the rule of law protect or limit people's chances to achieve the American dream under different systems of government? Imagine you are a journalist reporting on the lives of people in two different countries. One country has a representative government, where citizens vote and the rule of law protects people's rights. The other has an authoritarian government, where one leader makes all

	the decisions. Write an article comparing the daily lives, opportunities and freedoms of people in both countries. Explain how the rules, laws and government affect their ability to pursue their dreams and make choices. Show how the rule of law helps make the American Dream possible in a government that respects citizens' rights, and how its absence can limit opportunities.
8th (8.3)	The U.S. Constitution was created after the Revolutionary War to establish a system of government that protects citizens' rights and provides a framework for fairness. What key principles of the Constitution – such as separation of powers, checks and balances, individual rights, etc. – protect citizens and create opportunities for people to work toward their dreams? Use historical examples to show how the Constitution has shaped life in America and supported the idea of the American dream. You are a young citizen living in the United States shortly after the Constitution was ratified. Explain what your American dream is and describe how the Constitution and the rule of law now make that dream possible. Consider how laws, rights and the new system of government help provide fairness, protect your opportunities and allow you to pursue your goals.

High School	
Subject	Prompt
Oklahoma History (OKH.5.1, OKH.6.1)	When Oklahoma became a state, many different groups (Native nations, settlers and others) had to live under one set of laws. Explain how Oklahoma's state laws and Constitution were meant to bring people together. Did these laws give everyone an equal chance at the American dream? Why or why not? Imagine your family has just moved to Oklahoma in 1907. New laws are being made that will determine who has rights, opportunities and a fair chance at the American dream. Create a diary entry describing how these new laws might change your family's future. What hopes or worries do you have about life in the new state?
Sociology (S.3.1, S.4.2, S.5.1, S.6.1, S.6.2)	The rule of law is a central part of American society, shaping how social institutions influence individuals and communities. Explain how rules and laws help maintain social order and support individual success. How do changes in society – such as technological advances, social movements or economic shifts – alter access to the

	American dream? Use examples from history or modern society to support your analysis. Write a story about a person navigating life in the United States while trying to achieve their American dream. Show how the rule of law, social norms and institutions – such as schools, families and local government – shape their opportunities and choices. Include challenges the character faces because of social expectations, laws or economic and cultural systems, and show how following rules and working within society helps them overcome obstacles.
U.S. Government (USG.3.1, USG.3.3)	The American dream depends on a stable legal system that applies to everyone. Choose one constitutional principle (checks and balances, separation of powers, judicial review, etc.) and explain how it has protected the rule of law and helped preserve opportunities for Americans across history. Imagine you are attending a landmark Supreme Court hearing that will shape citizens' rights for generations. Write a letter to a friend describing what you witnessed in court, how the arguments reflect the rule of law and why the decision could change the future of the American dream. • <i>Resource Tip:</i> Recordings of Supreme Court arguments dating back to the fall of 1955 are available at www.oyez.org.
U.S. History (USH.1)	The rule of law has been central to shaping who has access to the American dream throughout U.S. history. In the post-Reconstruction era, laws and policies affected the freedoms and opportunities of minorities. Explain how laws and government actions helped or limited one or more groups in pursuing the American dream. Use historical examples to support your analysis. Write a story from the perspective of a person living in the United States between 1865 and the 1920s, navigating the challenges of the post-Reconstruction era. Explain what your character's American dream is and show how the rule of law, social norms and government policies affect their ability to pursue that dream. Include obstacles they face and how they respond to laws or social systems that either help or hinder their goals.
World History (WH.3.1)	During revolutions, people often fight for freedom and equality. But after the fighting ends, it can be hard to build fair laws for everyone. Compare the American Revolution to another revolution (such as the French or

	Haitian Revolution). How did each try to use laws to create a better future? Which revolution was more successful and why? Imagine you are living during a revolution in another country (France, Haiti or a Latin American country). Write a journal entry about how the changes in laws (or the lack of them) affect your daily life and your hopes for the future. Do you believe this revolution will make your country fairer?
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Art Prompts	
Grade	Prompt
All Grades	Choose one of the following prompts, or base your artwork on the theme “The Rule of Law and the American Dream”: • What is your American dream? Think about what helps you reach that dream, like rules, laws or help from your family, friends or community. • Show how the rule of law, rights or opportunities have shaped society and helped people achieve the American dream. <i>Artwork can be any size and made using any medium.</i>

For more information, visit www.okbar.org/lawday.